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ABSTRACT

Interdisciplinary middle school level teams capitalize on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Administrators and team members can maximize the advantages of teamwork using team assessments to increase the benefits for students, teachers, and the school environment. Assessing team performance can lead to high performing teams and public documentation of the benefits for students. By documenting the benefits for students, teachers, and schools, team assessments can justify the cost of common planning time for teachers and other staff members. Principals play a key role in the assessment process. Other key participants are team leaders, team members, and parents. Team assessment tools measure the current state of how the team works together and what the team produces. Assessments follow seven steps: determine the criteria of best practices, choose the assessment tool, collect data, determine discrepancies, target areas for improvement, set goals, and monitor and adjust. There are several categories of instruments used to assess team performance, including student achievement, student welfare, team effectiveness, team meeting, team process, and team leadership. The five appendixes offer: (1) the Team Effectiveness Critique for gauging team members' perceptions of 10 dimensions of caring, (2) the Team Process Inventory, (3) the Team Meeting Observation Form, (4) the Team Process Instrument, and (5) Team Leaders Metaphors (which generates discussion among team leaders in focus groups). (SM)

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ASSESSING TEAM PERFORMANCE

Susan Trimble and Jerry Rottier

ED 422 305

Interdisciplinary teams at the middle school level capitalize on the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Teachers planning together and pooling their talents meet the challenge of teaching 10-14 year old students better than teachers working alone. Administrators and team members can maximize these advantages of teamwork by using team assessments to increase the benefits for students, teachers, and the school environment.

Assessing team performance can lead to

* High performing teams
* Public documentation of the benefits for students

The Benefits of Assessing Team Performance

1. High Performance Teams.

While some teams function reasonably well, other teams exhibit the symptoms of dysfunctional teams (Rottier, 1996). The challenge is for the group of individuals to move beyond rudimentary levels of group work into a high performing team that focuses its efforts and energies on specific tasks. Assessing team performance helps individuals in this process of "growing" as a team. Working through the steps of assessment, individual group members become aware of the best practices of teaming, determine their current state of development, and assess the gap between the two conditions. Teams aware of the gaps between current practice and best practices establish procedures to relieve these discrepancies.

2. Public documentation of the benefits of teaming.

Today's tight budgetary constraints spotlight justifying the cost of school programs.

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School budget analysts take a strong look at cost/benefit factors. Common planning periods, an integral part of the teaming concept, are expensive. One middle school principal estimated the common planning period for a team cost the district $300.00 each time the team meets. In a medium-sized middle school, the elimination of team planning might save the district several hundred thousand dollars assuming teachers were assigned an additional teaching responsibility instead of the common planning period. On the state level, Georgia is in the process of collecting data from its middle schools to account for approximately $73 million a year appropriated by the Georgia Legislature for state middle school incentive grants. Decisions related to reallocation of these funds will depend on cost-benefits ratios and address the question: "Are the benefits of teaming sufficient to warrant the expense?"

By documenting the benefits for students, teachers, and schools, team assessments can justify the cost of a common planning time for teachers and any additional staff members.

Who does the assessing?

Principals play a key role in the assessment process. Assessment begins with the principal establishing clear e expectations for the high performance of teams. The principal identifies the characteristics of effective teaming and hold teams responsible for meeting those objectives. The principal monitors the progress of teams on a regular basis and assists the team to continually strive to meet these expectations. Where teams struggle, the principal provides the necessary assistance for teams to be successful.

Other key actors in the assessment process include team leaders, team members, and parents. By virtue of the responsibility to the team, the team leader is in a position to continually asses the team's effectiveness and take steps to help the team move forward. Periodic

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reflection by all members of the team will help the team on its journey of reaching the goals of improved student achievement and welfare. Parents of students on a team can offer valuable feedback which helps the team maintain its forward progress. Assessment from multiple sources will assist a team reach the higher levels of performance so clearly desired.

What is assessed?

Teams assessment tools measure the current state of how the team works together (team functioning) and/or what the team produces (team performance). The value of team functioning is to improve how individuals work together. The value of team performance is to target outcomes and gather measurable "hard" data for public documentation and future team development.

TEAM FUNCTIONING Assessment Question, "Is teamwork evident in all parts of the process?"	TEAM PERFORMANCE Assessment Question, "Is the work of the team making a difference in outcomes?"
❑ Group process and norms ❑ Decision making and problem solving ❑ Level of team development, ❑ Team chores and paper work ❑ Maximizing resources or inputs (team member personalities, student make-up, resources, school organization) ❑ Team connections with parents, administration, special ed, exploratory classes	❑ Student achievement ❑ Student well-being ❑ Teacher satisfaction ❑ Teacher innovation ❑ Teacher empowerment ❑ and satisfied ❑ team connections with parents, the administration, special ed, exploratory

The Process: How to assess team performance

Assessments in general follow seven steps:

1. Determine the criteria of best practices

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2. Choose the assessment tool
3. Collect data
4. Determine discrepancies
5. Target areas for improvement
6. Set goals
7. Monitor and adjust

Two approaches can be used to implementation these procedures. The first approach is top-down, outside-in, and often is an immediate response to a request and need. The intent may be for the administration to compare costs/benefits of various programs, reallocate funds, and/or solve immediate problems.

The second approach, team self-assessment, is bottom-up, team instigated, future-oriented, and continuous. The intent is for teams to learn, reflect, and grow together for mutual benefits. The process entails becoming knowledgeable about best practices, learning how to collect data, establishing goals, and measuring progress over a period of time.

This approach of team self-assessment is based on team members' desire for improvement, trust and honesty to enable open communication, and the confidence, and knowledge and skills to self-assess and examine the results.

What Are Some Tools For Use in Team Self-Assessments?

The type of instruments used to assess team performance reflect the goals of assessment. They fall into several categories:

1. Student achievement

The performance of students can be measured by national standardized tests such as the

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. Many states have established standards for student performance in middle schools and have developed assessment tools to measure the student progress on standards.

2. Student welfare

Team generated instruments can be developed to gather data about certain aspects of student welfare on the team. Checklists and questionnaires might capture data on student involvement in school activities, awards accrued by students such as listing on honor rolls, or attendance figures. Data on behavior for referrals for truancy and alcohol/drug related incident can be collected from administrative offices. Teacher records will reveal the extent of missing and/or late assignments. Recording parent involvement in school functions such as parent conferences will yield valuable information for team performance.

3. Other instruments that have been developed for collecting data on team performance include team functioning include:

The Team Effectiveness Critique (Appendix A) is a short ten-item form to gauge team members perceptions of ten dimensions of teaming.

The Team Process Inventory (Appendix B) addresses areas of team functioning in more detail and is useful for team members to compare their responses. It generates discussion on a variety of team processes and documents different perceptions of the team members.

Team Meeting Observation Form (Appendix C) provides a format for items to consider when observing a team meeting. It provides documentation of certain behaviors that may be used by an outside observer to share with the team. For example, a team member who dominates may be approached by indicating that s/he spoke 40 times while the other members spoke or

attempted to speak 5 times.

Team Process Instrument (Appendix D) are open-ended questions which ask teams to identify their strengths, areas that need improvement, and resources necessary to make these improvements.

Team Leader Metaphors (Appendix E) generates discussion among team leaders in focus groups. It may be used by administrators and team leaders to again insights into team leader perceptions of their teams and to generate enthusiasm and interest in a team leader's group.

Summary

Middle schools have discovered a powerful organizational strategy to assist them meet their goals of student achievement and student welfare. However, the quality of teaming needs to improve in order to meet these goals. Assessment of team performance is a step in the direction of helping teams move to a higher performance level.

Appendix A: *The Team Effectiveness Critique*

Appendix B *The Team Process Inventory*

Appendix C *Team Meeting Observation Form*

Appendix D *Team Process Instrument*

Appendix E *Team Leader Metaphors*

References

Rottier, J. (1996). *Implementing and Improving Teaming: A Handbook for Middle Level Leaders.* Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

The Team Effectiveness Critique*

Susan Trimble - Georgia Southern University

Directions: Circle the number on each scale that indicates how you feel about your team.

1. Goals and Objectives

There is a lack of commonly understood goals and objectives. — Team members understand and agree on team goals and objectives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Utilization of Talents

All team members' talents are not recognized and/or utilized. — Team members' talents are fully recognized and utilized.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Trust and Conflict

There is little trust among members, and conflict is evident. — There is a high degree of trust among members, and conflict is dealt with openly.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Leadership

One person dominates, and leadership roles are not carried out or shared. — There is full participation in leadership; leadership roles are shared by members.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Team Procedures

There is a lack of procedures, and time is wasted in team meetings and other team activities. — There are effective procedures in place that help team meetings and other activities to be worthwhile.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. Interpersonal Communication

Communication among members is closed and guarded.

Communication among members is open, relaxed, and often lively.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. Problem Solving/Decision Making

Decisions are made in a haphazard fashion leaving some members feeling left out.

The team has well-established approaches to problem solving and decision making wherein everyone participates.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Experimentation/Creativity

The team resists new approaches and rarely attempts to change routines or traditional formats of working with students.

The team is constantly trying out new ways to increase the learning and well-being of all students.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. Evaluation

The group never discusses its functioning, activities, or effect on students' achievement and well-being.

The team often evaluates its functioning, activities, and their effects on students' achievement and well-being.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Connections with the school and community

The team rarely interacts with other teachers and staff in the school, the administration, parents, or the community in planning team activities.

The team constantly interacts with others in the school, the administration, parents, and the community in planning team activities.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

*adapted from "The Team Effectiveness Critique" by Mark Alexander, University Associates, 1985 Annual: Developing Human Resources, pp. 105-106.

TEAM PROCESS INVENTORY *

For interdisciplinary Middle School Teams

1. Do you consider this team successful?
   1. Yes
   2. No

2. If you consider this team a success, what is one major reason for your thinking this team is successful? (Circle one or more)
   1. get along
   2. get the job done
   3. work together planning instruction
   4. we make decisions with everyone's input
   5. it is fun working together
   6. we are all friends
   7. some other reasons

   (please explain)_____

3. If you consider this team *not* a success, please identify one or more reasons why.
   1. _____% of the team members do not get along
   2. we do not get the job done
   3. we do not work together planning instruction
   4. we can not make decisions
   5. one person makes all the decisions
   6. no shared leadership
   7. our personalities clash
   8. some other reason(s)

   (please specify)_____

5. Are there subgroups, such as pairs or trios on your team that divide its efforts? If so, what are they?
   1. No, there are no subgroups
   2. Yes, there is one and 2 other people
   3. Yes, one and 3 or more together
   4. Yes, two and 2 or more together
   5. Yes, in the following configuration

_____

Directions for Items 5-30: On the following page is a list of behaviors that may describe aspects of your team. You are to decide whether the behavior is exhibited at the *present time* as always, often, occasionally, seldom, or never. Then write the number of the rating scale that reflects your thinking. Next mark the number of the rating scale that reflects your *desired* frequency of that behavior *in an ideal state*. If a behavior item does not apply to your team, mark the NA column (not applicable).

TEAM PROCESS INVENTORY

Rating Scale: (1) NA (2) never (3) seldom (4) occasionally (5) often (6) always

		Present Time	Desired Ideal State
Group Process and Management			
1.	Each of us participates in making team decisions	____	____
2.	We implement decisions we make as a team	____	____
3.	The team discusses team goals	____	____
4.	All of us speak openly with one another	____	____
5.	Each team member makes significant contribution to the team work load	____	____
6.	We bring closure to items we discuss	____	____
7.	We put time to good use in team meetings	____	____
8.	We make time in meetings to discuss teaching/learning	____	____
	TOTALS	____	____
Team Beliefs and Relationships			
9.	We share similar beliefs about teaching	____	____
10.	Our team members would rather work together than alone	____	____
11.	We trust each other	____	____
12.	I enjoy being on this team	____	____
13.	All of us are willing to collaborate	____	____
14.	We make an extra effort to help students succeed	____	____
15.	We recognize students' good behavior and work	____	____
16.	We value our differences	____	____
	TOTALS	____	____
Team Tasks			
17.	We have parent conferences as a team	____	____
18.	Each of us does at least two team thematic units a year	____	____
19.	Our team is represented in committees which establish school policy	____	____
20.	We refer some students for special services	____	____
21.	Our team benefits from business partnerships	____	____
22.	The team gives input about school budget items	____	____
23.	As a team we try out innovative ways of teaching	____	____
24.	Our team has a say in hiring new team members	____	____
25.	Has being on your team helped you make improved changes in your classroom?		
	TOTALS	____	____

* Developed by Susan Trimble, College of Education, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA 30460.

Team Meeting Observation Form

Susan Trimble - Georgia Southern University

Observer _____ *Name of Team* _____ *Date* _____

Management

All members present & on time
Recorder takes notes of meeting & decisions

Discussion

Equal participation
Clear question being discussed
Discussion stays focused on issue
Order to the items discussed

I :isions made and number

Specific decisions made and written down
Adequate brainstorming and input from members
Types of decisions
related to student behavior, learning/academics,
extracurricular, student well-being.....

Leadership

Organized use of time
Shows understanding of others
Clarifies needs and issues
Keeps discussion focused
Recalls goals when appropriate

Summary

TEAM PROCESS INSTRUMENT

Dr. Jerry Rottier
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INDIVIDUAL TEAM SURVEY

SCHOOL _____

TEAM _____

What positive accomplishments can be attributed to your team? Please address accomplishments as they relate to students, staff, parents, curriculum, instruction, etc. Be as specific as possible and indicate any evidence you have for these accomplishments.

INDIVIDUAL TEAM SURVEY

SCHOOL _____

TEAM _____

What aspects of teaming have you not accomplished to the extent that your team desired? Please address these items as they relate to students, staff, parents, curriculum, instruction, etc. Be as specific as possible and for each item, indicate the reason(s) they have not been accomplished.

INDIVIDUAL TEAM SURVEY

SCHOOL _____

TEAM _____

What resources does your team need to accomplish the tasks desired by the team? Resources may be in the form of staff development, budget, time, facilities, equipment, support, etc.

NOTE: Each of these items are placed on separate sheets.

TEAM LEADERS METAPHORS

FEELINGS

1. Right now, I feel _____ about the job of team leader.

2. If I had a magic wand, for my job as team leader, I would wish for _____
_____
_____

3. My ideal team would include _____
_____
and right now my team is _____

4. Our team is moving in this direction (circle one arrow):

I, as team leader am trying to _____ (continue, change, encourage, or your choice of words) this direction by doing _____
_____
_____
_____ (describe your actions).

MEMORIES

5. The best thing our team has done was _____
The part I played as team leader was to _____
_____

6. The worst thing our team has done was _____
The part I played as team leader was to _____
_____

7. I became team leader because _____
_____

RATIONAL THOUGHTS

8. The hardest thing about being a team leader is _____
_____

9. I think a team leader should do the following (as his/her job of team leader)
_____
_____
_____

IMAGINATION

10. I see my team as ....
___a flock of birds because _____
___a horse because _____
___a cat because _____
___a zoo _____
___like a _____ (name an animal) because _____
_____

None of the above, I think of it as simply _____
_____

11. If I look at my team as a _____ (question 1), I can also see myself (as team leader) playing the part of _____
_____

12. If our team teachers' had a vehicle to drive, it would be a
___a Ford Ranger truck because _____
___a ZX19 (a racy car) because _____
___a station wagon because _____
___a MG because _____
___your choice of a _____ because _____
_____

13. Our team's fairy tale line would be
___and they lived happily forever after
___and they couldn't put humpty dumpty together again
___the seven dwarfs each so different but with a job to do
___the ugly duckling
___Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair (so we may climb up)
___the gallant prince(ss) cutting through the thicket
___Cinderella doing all the work

because _____
_____

_____

Developed By S. Trimble (1997), Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA 30460.